

SOCIAL MOBILITY IN DANIEL DEFOE'S MOLL FLANDERS (1722)

(A MARXIST APPROACH)



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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas tentang mobilitas sosial dalam Moll Flanders (1722) oleh Daniel Defoe yang mana dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan Marxist yang di kemukakan oleh Karl Marx. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah antara lain untuk mengetahui indikator-indikator dari mobilitas sosial suatu individu didalam masyarakat, pendiskripsian-pendiskripsian bagaimana proses mobilitas sosial di dalam masyarakat, dan pertimbangan penulis terhadap keberadaan mobilitas sosial. Penelitian ini dikategorikan ke dalam penelitian kualitatif. Data primer dari penelitian ini adalah novel Moll Flanders (1722) oleh Daniel Defoe dan biografi pengarang. Data sekunder dari penelitian ini berupa referensi-referensi yang di ambil dari buku-buku teori, situs-situs web dan sumber lain yang berkaitan dengan isu mobilitas sosial. Ada tiga kesimpulan yang dapat di tarik dari penelitian ini. Pertama, ada tiga indikator didalam proses mobilitas sosial yaitu pencapaian pendidikan, jenis-jenis pendapatan dan jumlah aset atau kekayaan. Kedua, proses mobilitas sosioial digambarkan melalui empat tahap yaitu menjadi pembantu, penyalahgunaan pernikahan, menjadi pencuri, dan menjadi pemilik perkebunan. Ketiga, pertimbangan Daniel Defoe terhadap isu mobilitas sosial yaitu ingin mengungkapkan kepada pembaca tentang keberadaan pencapaian kaum borjuis wanita dalam masyarakat kapitalis.

Kata kunci: mobilitas sosial, *Moll Flanders*, Borjuis, Proletar, Marxisme

ABSTRACT

This study is about social mobility in *Moll Flanders* (1722) by Daniel Defoe. It is analyzed by using Marxist approach that is proposed by Karl Marx. The objectives of this study are to find out the indicators of individual's social mobility in society, the depictions of the process of social mobility in society, and the author concern towards the existence of social mobility. This research seizes on qualitative research. The primary data of this study is *Moll Flanders* (1722) by Daniel Defoe and the biography of the author. The secondary data of this study is taken from, literary books, websites and the other sources that related to the issue of social mobility. There are three conclusions which can be drawn from this study. Firstly, there are three indicators that indicate social mobility; education attainment, the parts of income, and wealth. Secondly, the process of social mobility is depicted into four steps; being a servant, marriage misuse, being a thief, and being the plantation owner. Thirdly, Daniel Defoe concern toward social mobility issue is that he wants to reveal the existence of achievement of bourgeoisie woman in capitalist society.

Keywords: Social mobility, *Moll Flanders*, Bourgeoisie, Proletariat, Marxism

1. INTRODUCTION

Moll Flanders is one of the English novels written by Daniel Defoe. He was born in 1660 in London, England. Defoe drew a new literary path, around the age of 59 years old when he published "*Robinson Crusoe*". After that, a number of novels pursued soon including *Moll Flanders*, *Colonel Jack*, *Captain Sigleton*, *Journal of the Plague Year* and *Roxana*. Briefly, *Moll Flanders* is a memoir novel which tells about the ups and downs of the main character Moll to qualify her life into a wealthy woman. Based on the plot of the story social mobility is compatible issue to be discussed. Social mobility has become crucial discussion among the societies since the human civilization exist. Society is the main reason of social mobility occurrence. Society is the horde of human which have different perspective, status and social class which causes human's movement in those aspects. Therefore, the writer defines social mobility not only as a means of movement in society which is done by the human being to achieve their social class destination but also as means that can abdicate their class destination.

There are many definitions of social mobility which underlain the writer's definition. Saunders (2010: 11) explains that social mobility is related to the individual's movement in the society that moves from one position to another position. Furthermore, social mobility can be divided into intra-generational mobility that can be measured by looking the progression of individuals from one position to the better position or vice versa. In writing this research, the writer has found some previous studies related to *Moll Flanders*. The previous studies that writer has found only have similarity in its approach and the novel. There is no researcher that discusses *Moll Flanders* by taking social mobility issue. The first research came from Gabriel Cervantes in summer 2011 under the title *Convict Transportation and Penitence in Moll Flanders*. This essay aimed at the issue of Moll's humble petition and form of self-reflexive penitence by using psychoanalytic approach in discussing his issue. The second is an essay by Joshua Gass in winter 2014 entitled *Moll Flanders Bastard Birth of Realist Character*. This essay aimed at the issue of tracing eighteenth century skepticism of time who argued that human interaction with concept as basic as causality via the construction of expectation and that identity is a retrospective attempt to enforce coherence performed by imagination as much as memory. Sociological approach was chosen by him. And the third essay is by Julie Shaffer in winter 1999 entitled *Familial Love, Incest, and Female Desire in Late Eighteenth Century British Women's Novel*. This essay aimed at examining the themes of familial love, incest and female desire in eighteenth century women.

The fourth essay is written by Lisa Moore in fall 1992 under the title *Something More Tender Still Than Friendship: Romantic Friendship in Early Nineteenth Century England: Feminist Studies*. This essay aimed at examining of early 19th century literature demonstrates how powerful a part of category of female homosexuality played in the cultural imaginary of the period. The fifth by Yo-huei Wang in 2011 entitled *Love and Money in Daniel Defoe's Moll Flanders*. The essay discusses one women's relationship to early capitalism in Moll Flanders. The researcher analyzes the patriarchal system through Moll Flanders. The sixth previous research is by Gayle Ellen Green in 1997 under the title

Marriage and Motherhood in Defoe's Roxana and Moll Flanders. This essay aimed at the traditional role for women in eighteenth century. The seventh research is by Emily M Smith in 2001 entitled *Entertaining Modernity: How Far Eighteenth Century Heroines Women Social Change*. This essay aimed at claiming that the novelistic form developed in England and France to mediate social change. Her research focuses on feminism.

The eighth essay is written by Hall Gibson Gladfelder in 1993 under the title *Criminality and Narrative in Eighteenth Century England*. This research focuses on the study of criminality in eighteenth century England. The ninth essay is written by Kathryn Strong entitled *Dress and Deception Women's dress and the Eighteenth Century British Novel*. Her research aimed at establishing women's dress as a gendered means of negotiating reality's relationship to fiction in the early eighteenth century women. Her research is a gender studies. The similarity of this research with the previous researcher is that the researcher uses the same data and object. This research also has similarity in Marxist approach with some of previous researcher. The difference of this research is that this research will obviously present different issue and discussion. The researcher assumes that there has not specific analysis yet about social mobility in society by using this novel. Therefore this research is literary different from the previous researches

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In writing this study, the writer use qualitative method. Followings are the points of qualitative method. Firstly, this type of this study is descriptive qualitative. Secondly, the object of this study is separated into two parts, formal object and material object. The formal object is the social mobility while the material object is Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722). Thirdly, the primary data source is come from the novel itself and the secondary data is taken from some literary book, websites and related sources. Fourthly, the method of data collection is taken by observing the background of the story in the novel and the other stuffs that related to the emergence of the novel. The writer then makes some description on the notes about the data that have been observed. The last is

the technique of collecting data which is divided into three stages; data reduction, data elaboration, and data conclusion. All those points of qualitative method are used to analyze social mobility in Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) by using Marxist approach.

3. UNDERLYING THEORY

Marxist theory eventually considered to the political practice. There are many names that still claim toward it such as the labor theory of value, the notion of historical laws, the contradiction between the forces and the relation of production, the model of base and structure, the idea of class identity, the supposedly scientific basis of Marxist epistemology, the concept of false consciousness and the philosophy of dialectical materialism. It works to show that the word "Marxist" is a set of family resemblance than some immutable essence. The word "Marxist" here is claimed to show a set of family resemblance than some immutable essence. Obviously Marx and Engels disavowed that the idea of social class or even class struggle was to their way of thinking. They also claim about their theory that the rise and fall of historical modes of production give the side effect to the rise and fall of social class (Eagleton and Milne, 1996: 15).

Sorokin (1998: 133) utters that social mobility is any transition of social object or value of human activity creation from one social position to another. Based on its types, social mobility has two principal on its types. The first is horizontal social mobility or "shifting". It is explained that the process of transition of individual or social object occurs in the same level. For instance the transition from the Baptist to the Methodist religious group, from one family to another by divorce or remarriage, the second type is vertical social mobility which focuses on the transition of an individual from one social stratum to another based on the direction of the transition. Vertical social mobility itself has been divided into two types; ascending and descending or social climbing and social sinking.

1. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the process of writing analysis, the writer intends to make a clear explanation by mapping the social mobility into three main parts; the first is

the indicators of social mobility, the second is the depiction of social mobility in *Daniel Defoe's Moll Flanders*, and the third is the author's concerns in social mobility

4.1 Main Findings

4.1.1 Indicators of Social Mobility

The process of individual movement in society or social mobility can be detected by observing the indicators that follow during the life of individual itself in society. The writer then observes the indicators of social mobility through the main character additional character in *Daniel Defoe's Moll Flanders*. Here are the indicators that can be presented:

4.1.1.1 Educational attainment

Education can be the indicator of social mobility because its level obviously will affect the class position in society. In this case, education attainment defines the class position of people in society. People with high education have a chance to manage the people with less education. It is showed in the first data that Moll as the main character who comes from people with less education. The data is presented below:

I have told that in one of neighbor nations, whether it be in France or where else I know not, they have an order from the king, that when any criminal is condemned, either to die, or to the galleys, or to be transported, if they leave any children, as such are generally unprovoked for, by the poverty or forfeiture of their parents, so they are immediately taken into the care of the Government, and put into hospital called the House of Orphans, where they are bred up, clothed, fed, taught, and when fit to go out, are placed out to trades or to services, so as to be well able to provide for themselves by an honest, industrious behavior. (MF: 10)

4.1.1.2 The parts of income

Another indicator is the part of income because people who live in society need to keep their living. Moll works for the ladies of

the town such as linen to make, mend the laces and heads to dress up. By doing those kinds of work, Moll gets money to keep her life in society. Her social movement or social mobility is begun from her adventure of getting her own money as a workwoman.

But the kindness of the ladies of the town did not end here, for when they came to understand that I was no more maintained by the public allowance as before, they gave me money oftener than formerly; and as I grew up they brought me work to do for them, such as linen to make, and laces to mend, and heads to dress up, and not only paid me for doing them but even taught me how to do them; so that now I was a gentlewoman indeed, as I understood that word, I not only found myself clothes and paid my nurse for my keeping, but got money in my pocket too beforehand (MF: 16-17).

4.1.1.3 Asset holding (Wealth)

Asset holding is found more in this novel as one of the indicators of social mobility. Asset holding here is meant as some valuable things that can be changed into money. It is reflected in the statement of character Moll where her husband pawn twenty pieces of fine Holland for #30. It is actually worth #90 and another asset like fine muslins and some plate that can be worth up to #500.

My husband was so civil to me, for still I say he was much of a gentleman, that in the first letter he wrote me from France, he let me know where he had pawned twenty pieces of fine holland for #30, which were really worth #90, and enclosed me the token and an order for the taking them up, paying the money, which I did and made in time above #100 of them, having leisure to cut them and sell them, some and some, to private families, as opportunity offered. However, with all this, and all that I had secured before, I found, upon casting things up, my case was very much altered, and my fortune much lessened; for, including the hollands and a parcel of fine muslins, which I carried off before, and some plate, and other things, I found I could hardly muster up #500; and my condition was very odd, for though I had no child (I

had had one by my gentleman draper, but it was buried),..(MF: 59)

4.1.2 The Depiction of Social Mobility

4.1.2.1 Being a servant

The young Moll is not reluctant to be a servant and finally she chooses to work as workwoman first. In the first experience, she gets her own money by working for the ladies in the town. She is being able to maintain herself and keep her living in the House of Orphans. The writer then can see the process of social mobility by the elaboration above. The social mobility is depicted by the way of Moll get her own money through her first own choice to be a workwoman for the ladies in the town.

When I had money; and this made them oftentimes give me more, till at last I was indeed called upon by the magistrates, as I understood it, to go out to service; but then I was come to be so good a workwoman myself, and the ladies were so kind to me, that it was plain I could maintain myself—that is to say, I could earn as much for my nurse...(MF: 16)

4.1.2.2 Abusing Marriage

Another social mobility is depicted in this plot. In this plot Moll implies that marriage is not a big deal for her. Marriage in Moll's view is as means of business. She implies again that marriage here is a way to get the wealth, even she does not care whether she is married or not. In some cases, Moll also does adultery and prostitution to get the wealth in society. It is then delineated from the situation when one of the gentlemen proposes Moll to be married.

It will not be strange if I now began to think, but alas! It was but very little solid reflection. I had a most unbounded stock of my vanity and pride, and but a very little stock of virtue. I did indeed case sometimes with myself what young master aimed at, but thought of nothing but the fine words and the gold; whether he intended to marry me, or not marry me, seemed a matter of no great consequence to me; nor did my thoughts so much as suggest to me the necessity of ,making any

capitulation for myself, till he came to make a kind of formal proposal to me, as you shall hear presently. (MF: 25)

4.1.2.3 Being a thief

Another social mobility is depicted through her adventure as a thief. This is because of Moll's marriages did not long last. This plot drives Moll to the condition where she has to put off her house and decide to take the lodging. Moll even reduces her good to maintain her living in society. She then thinks that marriage is not a proper way anymore to get wealth and maintain her position in society. She gradually aware of her age is not young anymore to approach the gentleman. The depiction of social mobility is implied in the narration below that Moll intent to be a thief to keep their living and get wealth.

For a little relief I had put off my house and took lodgings; and as I was reducing my living, so I sold off most of my goods, which put a little money in my pocket, and I lived near a year upon that, spending very sparingly, and eking things out to the utmost; but still when I looked before me, my very heart would sink within me at the inevitable approach of misery and want. Oh let none read this part without seriously reflecting on the circumstances of a desolate state, and how they would grapple with mere want of friends and want of bread; it will certainly make them think not of sparing what they have only, but of looking up to heaven for support, and of the wise man's prayer, 'Give me not poverty, lest I steal.' (MF: 172)

4.1.2.4 Being a plantation owner

In this plot, the depiction of social mobility begins from Moll's condition as a transported convict after her criminal act as a thief. Moll and the other prisoners are destined to be sold for slaves. It is said that some of obligation is under bond but the other as long as he lived. Moll and her Lancashire husband has different obligation but they plan together to make their condition as a business and out of from government rules..

As our fate was now determined, and we were both on board, actually bound to Virginia, in the despicable quality of transported convicts destined to be sold for slaves, I for five years, and he under bonds and security not to return to England any more, as long as he lived, he was very much dejected and cast down; the mortification of being brought on board, as he was, like a prisoner, piqued him very much, since it was first told him he should transport himself, and so that he might go as a gentleman at liberty. It is true he was not ordered to be sold when he came there, as we were, and for that reason he was obliged to pay for his passage to the captain, which we were not; as to the rest, he was as much at a loss as a child what to do with himself, or with what he had, but by directions. (MF: 279)

4.1.3 Defoe's Concern on Social Mobility

In the end of the plot, Defoe stresses his concern on social mobility that is related to the existence of capitalist society. His intention by inserting social mobility issue is that he wants to reveal the existence of the gentlewomen in society. It means that Defoe wants to reject the assumption that capitalism was fundamentally a masculine dream.

My husband, you may suppose, was a little surprised at the arriving of all this cargo from England; and talking with me after he saw the account of this particular, 'My dear,' says he, 'what is the meaning of all this? I fear you will run us too deep in debt: when shall we be able to make return for it all?' I smiled, and told him that it was all paid for; and then I told him, that what our circumstances might expose us to, I had not taken my whole stock with me, that I had reserved so much in my friend's hands, which now we were come over safe, and was settled in a way to live, I had sent for, as he might see. (MF: 305)

4.2 Discussion

In this discussion, the writer tends to discuss the emergence of social mobility in Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*. This is the second novel which was written by English author, Daniel Defoe. In revealing the existence of social

mobility in *Moll Flanders*, the writer firstly needs to discuss the origin of the author's class in society. It is due to literature basically reflects an author's own class and class relation. Based on his biography, Defoe is a pioneer of economic journalism. He comes from a butcher family. Defoe enters the world of business as a general merchant after leaving school. His trading consists of hosiery, woolen goods and wine. His trading always run into success but in the particular time he is arrested for payment. Defoe afterward travels to Europe and Scotland. He also ever operates the factory of tile and brick in Essex. By the brief biography above, the writer implies that the author's class Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* comes from bourgeois status.

Consequently, the author's bourgeois status here can be traced through characterization of the character in *Moll Flanders*. Defoe's bourgeois status is reflected through the characters of some gentlemen in the story. In the beginning of the story Defoe creates the character Robert and Robin as the gentleman who comes from a wealthy family. They are called wealthy family due to the kinds of business that they hold. Robert and Robin's parents also occupy in the government level, Defoe then emerges the name Mayor and Mayoress. Another reflection of Defoe's bourgeois status is the character of gentleman who becomes a linen draper. This character enables to reflect the life of the author when enters the world of business as general merchant. The bourgeoisie characters are then emphasized on other gentlemen like a handsome Irish wealthy gentlemen and Moll's Virginia husband with his plantation business. Besides, in the last part of the story Defoe changes the main character Moll into bourgeois character as well. This change proves the existence of social mobility in the story.

This discussion furthermore traces Defoe's bourgeois status through the narrations that is written in the some plots. The author tells in the early pages which show his bourgeois status. The narration implies that government has a right to take care the children from proletariat status. The government take care the children in case to be placed out in trades or services. The other narration is told from the main character's aside that she has a dream to be a gentlewoman, the young girl Moll do not want to be a servant at first. All of those narration in some

plots and the characterization of the character which is compared to author's biography, it can be drawn that the author comes from bourgeoisie society. Defoe here indirectly undermines the proletariat by entering criminality and the misuse of marriage law in the main characterization in achieving her bourgeois status.

The writer then discusses author's ideology which is disguised in Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*. The writer thinks that author's ideology is necessary to be discussed because author's ideology will exactly affect his literary works. This discussion further examines whether the author implies bourgeois or proletariat ideology. Knowing that the sequences of the plot in Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* tell more about the condition of trades of some gentlemen, for instance the trade situation when the linen draper gentleman become Moll's spouse. This plot illustrates the main character Moll's affair with the linen draper as means of getting position and wealth, it also happens with the other tradesman. In the middle part of the plot illustrates the main character Moll in thievery as a means of getting money and wealth to enhance her position in society. In the last part of the plot the main character Moll turns into the plantation owner and ultimately gets her bourgeois status in society due to the amount of wealth and income that Moll gets.

The author's ideology is overwhelmed implicitly through the narrations of the main character *Moll Flanders*. The narration said that the assumption of Moll's circumstance based on the amount of money and wealth that she had. Moreover, she deliberately abuses the existence of marriage to mend up and enhance her circumstance. In some cases, another wicked ways like adultery, prostitution and thievery is also done by the main character in order to get money and wealth in society. It can be concluded that money and wealth become the main controller of Moll's circumstance. Those things also indicate the process of her social mobility in achieving bourgeois status. From the previous elaboration, the writer is able to draw the author's ideology that is implied in this story. Since the Marxist's ideology is determined by the economics, it is true that Moll's life is controlled by money and wealth. It is then drawn that Defoe rises up the bourgeoisie ideology in his own life and affects to his literary work. Bourgeoisie

ideology itself mainly centralizes money or capital to control the human beings in society.

After discussing the author's ideology, the writer intends to trace the author's alignment on his novel, Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*. The alignment here is meant that this story served as propaganda for status quo of bourgeoisie or tries to undermine the bourgeoisie society. The writer concludes that Defoe serves more this story as propaganda for status quo than undermining the bourgeoisie society. The following elaboration will be the emphasizing Defoe's status quo on bourgeoisie. The writer here views from the way the author creates the characters. His characters creating in *Moll Flanders* are mainly depicted as bourgeois. That characters such as the tradesman, the constables, the magistrates, the governor, the Mayor and Mayoress. Furthermore, the rest of the characters are created as proletariat such as the main character Moll, governess, and Moll's mother but in the end of the story their characterization turns into bourgeois character as well.

Apart from characterization of the character, the writer traces Defoe's alignment from the narrations that present his alignment in bourgeoisie. It can be inferred in the main character's narration, In every plots when Moll was committing her action like abusing marriage, thievery, and plantation business, she always accumulate her wealth as much as possible. The conclusion from the discussion above can be said that Daniel Defoe may want to reveal his aside through the process of social mobility of proletarian woman to get her bourgeois status in the capitalist society. His revelation due to the term of capitalist is always being the man's dream in 18th century. Here, Defoe implicitly shows us the existence of bourgeois woman and rejects the previous term of capitalism is a man's dream. In other side the writer also draws the conclusion through this discussion that social mobility is able to happen in society due to the class prejudice by each individuals.

5. CONCLUSION

The first conclusion of this study is that the writer finds three indicators of social mobility in Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* that compatible with the writer's selected theories. The indicators are education attainment, the

parts of income, and asset holding or wealth. Those indicators will be concluded one by one. The education attainment here is founded as the indicator of social mobility because it defines people's social mobility in getting their position. The parts of income that are described in the narration is like the kinds of money; shillings, guineas, pence, and sterling. Another income can be in the form of stuffs like gold, watch, and so on. The last indicator that is found by the writer is the emergence of asset holding or wealth.

Furthermore, the writer will draw the conclusion through the second problem statement of this study. In this study, the writer finds four depiction of social mobility. The depiction of social mobility begins from being a servant in the young age. This stage is called the depiction of social mobility because it mends up Moll's life in society notwithstanding her status still in proletarian. The next depiction is her adventure by abusing the marriage. This is due to her fate as a pretty woman, so she can attract some gentlemen easily. This stage includes the depiction of Moll's social mobility because she uses the marriage as her business to get bourgeois status in society. Another social mobility depiction is by her adventure in thievery. In this situation Moll is known as an expert thief for many years, she finally becomes the richest thief in England. This stage of social mobility depiction gives Moll good circumstances in economic aspect but not with her spirit.

The last part of this conclusion is about Defoe's concern in entering social mobility in his writing. In writing *Moll Flanders*, Defoe exactly is affected by his own life in society. It means that some of Defoe's life experience sets up in his writing. Defoe here wants to reveal the condition of capitalism by entering social mobility issue which is done by the main character Moll. Defoe chooses heroine character does not mean to set her perspective on feminism. In other side, he wants to reveal the existence of gentlewomen in achieving bourgeois status. The writer then concludes that the author want to give us his ideology in viewing society and its mobility. It is exactly acceptable to criticize the condition of recent society that always related to its history as well.

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